



# Kentucky One-Stop Certification Project Report

---

*Final Standards, Measures and  
Implementation Process*

*September 14, 2011*

*Submitted to:*

*Submitted by:*



**Maher & Maher**  
www.mahernet.com



# Contents

---

FOREWORD .....	2
A. PROJECT CONTEXT .....	3
B. PROJECT ORGANIZATION .....	5
C. PROJECT PROCESS .....	7
D. COORDINATION WITH OTHER PROJECTS .....	11
E. CONCLUSION .....	12

Appendices (separate documents):

- Appendix A. Kentucky One-Stop Certification Team Charter
- Appendix B. Commonwealth-Level Issues for Steering Team Consideration
- Appendix C. Kentucky Final Site Visit Report
- Appendix D. Kentucky One-Stop Certification Implementation Recommendation
- Appendix E. Standards and Measures for Employer, Jobseeker, One-Stop Management
- Appendix F. Kentucky One-Stop Affiliate Center Standards

## FOREWORD

---

This report is intended primarily to transmit the key documents that together comprise Kentucky's One Stop Certification System:

- Certification Standards and Measures for Employer Services
- Certification Standards and Measures for Jobseeker Services
- Certification Standards and Measures for One Stop Management
- Certification Standards for Affiliate Centers
- Implementation Framework and Process

The report is not meant to be a recitation of the proceedings of the entire project, but is intended solely to add context and depth in order to enhance understanding of the output of the project, all of which is contained in the Appendices to the report, and which actually constitute the KWIB-approved One Stop Certification System.

Just one editorial comment from the consulting team: We would like to recognize and thank the Core Team members, who actually collaborated to create the system, for their hard work and dedication to the cause of exceptional customer service. If the managers and staff of the One Stop Centers work nearly as hard to achieve the standards as the Core Team did in developing them, the workers and employers of Kentucky will be far better off.

## A. PROJECT CONTEXT

In its WorkSmart Kentucky Strategic Plan, the Kentucky Workforce Investment Board (KWIB) established its broad strategy to transform the Commonwealth’s workforce investment system. The KWIB set forth the following vision:

“Transform the workforce development system through innovative practices which enhance sustainable economic and job growth to improve the lives of Kentuckians.”

A number of goals were established, centered on aligning the workforce system with the State’s education objectives and economic development strategies; and simplifying the service delivery system while improving the quality of services in order to achieve a customer-centered system. The KWIB proceeded to establish over two dozen strategic initiatives to achieve those goals. While all of the initiatives served to support the goals, some were especially crucial to the transformation, as shown below:

The One Stop Center Certification initiative was unique in that all of the WorkSmart initiatives intersect and ultimately reside in One Stop Career Centers; the Centers therefore constitute the heart of the State’s workforce development system. As part of its overall strategy, WorkSmart Kentucky called for development of the One Stop Certification system in order to ensure:

- Consistent, high-quality services to employers and job seekers throughout the state;
- User-friendly, customer-focused services;
- Alignment with education and economic development;
- Accountability for services and results; and
- Maximization of all workforce development resources.



In its initial planning to facilitate the process of establishing the certification system, Maher and Maher stated that the purpose of the project would be to create a One-Stop Certification System (“System”) that:

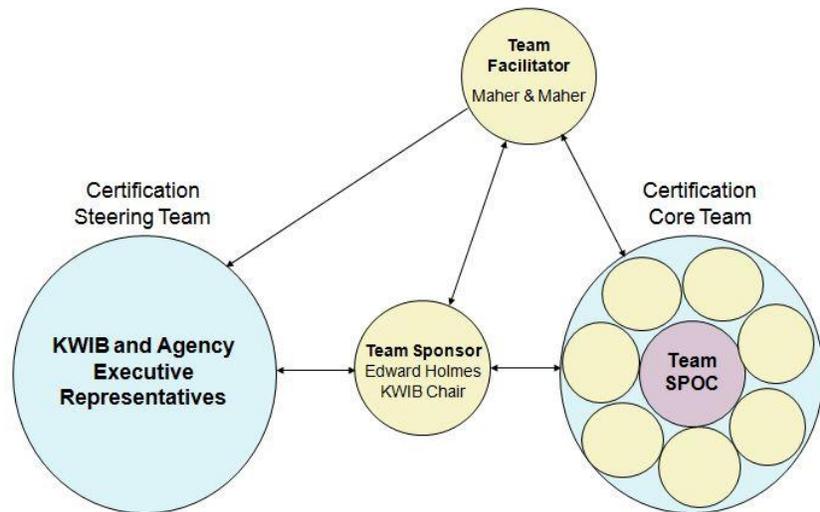
- Is consistent with the policy parameters and guidance of the State Workforce Investment Board;
- Builds upon and fosters achievement of the One Stop Assessment Criteria promulgated by the State;
- Encourages implementation at the One Stop level of other key State initiatives, including sector strategies, high performance WIB criteria, standard branding and work ready communities criteria;
- Systematically seeks to break down silos between WIA and Wagner-Peyser functions, and those of related, extended partner disciplines including education, economic development, income support programs, vocational rehabilitation and social services;
- Reflects the consensus of a multi-level, geographically diverse, cross-functional One-Stop Certification Team (“Team”);
- Includes a clear policy framework, quality customer service and management standards, and implementation process; and
- Draws the support of the broad workforce system in implementation.

## B. PROJECT ORGANIZATION

In working with Kentucky to facilitate development of the system, Maher’s consultants felt it was critical for those who operate, oversee and rely on the One Stop System to play integral roles in setting the standards that would be used to certify One Stop Centers. We also felt that an effective certification system:

- Requires a clear vision for the One Stop System
- Requires a process that is:
  - Clearly owned
  - Consensus-based – across Workforce Investment areas, Agencies, Public and private sectors, and levels of government and staff
  - Transparent
  - Designed to educate and create champions
- Has a clear implementation strategy

The essential organizational framework was established by the Project Team Charter (Appendix A). A Steering Team of One-Stop State partner agency executives, WIB members and others would establish the vision for the system; receive, review and revise Core Team recommendations for the system; and also be responsible for ensuring full System implementation.



The Core Team was established to develop the Certification System and to become champions for its full implementation. The makeup of the Core Team generally mirrored that of the Steering Team at the staff and local levels. The Core Team met for a period of one and one-half days, once per month, from January through July, 2011. Together, the team facilitators from Maher & Maher, the Core Team and the Steering Team would ensure that the process was consensus-based, transparent, etc.

The KWIB, as the Team Sponsor, would ultimately approve the certification system for implementation. At its first meeting, the Steering Team created a dual vision, one for the workforce system as a whole, and one for the certification system that would seek to ensure its materialization:



### WF System Vision

Kentucky will have a credible, value-added, **customer-centric** One-Stop Career Center system that promotes **sector-based** talent development and **supports the economic development goals** of the local area, region and state. It will provide fully **accessible holistic services** by employing a unified approach among well-coordinated and **aligned partners**.

### Certification System Vision

The certification system will be **flexible** and seek to establish the **highest achievable standards**, and will acknowledge that different strengths, economic conditions, and approaches may exist in **different areas of the State**. It will **foster collaboration** and sharing of promising practices between and among One-Stop Career Centers across Kentucky.

It was this dual vision that guided the development process.

## C. PROJECT PROCESS

---

The entire development process – the steps, the manner in which they were carried out, and the outcomes sought – was designed to be positive. It was made clear from the outset that the system’s objective was not to “catch” or punish One Stop Centers in any way, but rather to ensure that each certified Center meet a certain level of consistency and quality in its processes and interactions with customers and its management practices. Although the framework for the system (items like certification levels, who would have the authority to grant certification, etc.) would not be discussed until all standards and measures were set, it was emphasized from the outset that Center **self-**assessment, technical assistance to help Centers achieve standards, and incentives for achieving certification would be the bywords for the system – **not** sanctions or penalties. It was also clear that Centers would not be expected to “stand” for certification immediately, but rather that an agreed-upon phase-in period of outreach, education, self-assessment and technical assistance (where needed) would be provided.

Further, the collaborative nature of the process, where Core Team members representing all partner agencies and employer customers had to reach consensus on all key issues before proceeding to the next issue, was designed to ensure not just acceptance, but active support and eventual “championing” of the system by those who created it.

While collaboration and consensus were core guiding values in the development of the certification system, it should also be emphasized that “aiming high” and setting rigorous standards were also core values throughout development. Core team members were encouraged to set the highest possible standards throughout the development process. After an initial brief period of team “storming and forming”, Core Team members did in fact clearly seek to set the highest possible standards. In doing so, the Core Team identified a number of areas where State-level action, if taken, would enable the setting of even higher standards (see Appendix B “Commonwealth-Level Issues for Steering Team Consideration and Action”).

The project process consisted of three basic stages:

- Assessment of One Stop Operations
- Formation of the Steering and Core Teams
- Implementation of a consultation and facilitation process resulting in development of a Certification system

### Stage 1: Assessment of One Stop Operations

Maher staff visited one One Stop Center in each of ten workforce areas for a number of reasons, one of which was to learn from local operators those factors that would make the system of standards and measures most meaningful and acceptable in the field. (A “Final Report on Visits to One-Stop Centers” is included here as Appendix C.) Once briefed on the project, there was a general consensus among One Stop management and staff that the One Stop Certification system should be:

- Flexible and allow for local/regional differences
- Supportive and add value for the One-Stop system
- Simple and streamlined
- Forward thinking and relevant over time
- Achievable
- Implemented gradually
- Focused on customer service

Along with principles discussed above, these perspectives became a part of the guiding principles driving development of the system.

## Stage 2: Formation of the Steering and Core Teams

State-level officials comprised the Steering Team, as discussed in Part B, above. In discussing the make-up of the Core Team, it was decided that representation should:

- Be drawn primarily from the local level, but include a small sample of state-level representatives;
- Include representatives from all partner agencies and from the employer stakeholder group;
- Include a range of staff, from Directors to receptionists; and
- Be limited to about twenty-two members.

The State invited partner agencies to nominate individuals to serve on the Core Team, and the Team was eventually populated by choosing individuals from the nominee pool who would satisfy the criteria listed above.

The Steering Team convened initially in November of 2010 for a briefing on the project and to provide the input to form the Team Charter discussed in Part B, above. Subsequent in-person meetings were held in March, June and July of 2011 to discuss, revise and subsequently approve portions of the system as developed by the Core Team; and a final virtual meeting was held in August to approve the “Implementation Framework and Process” (see Appendix D).

Core Team meetings held once per month from January through July, supplemented by occasional virtual meetings via conference call, were utilized to develop the system, as discussed below.

## Stage 3: Implementation of a consultation and facilitation process resulting in a Certification System

Maher’s facilitators guided the Core Team through a process of establishing the following essential elements of the Certification system:

- Standards for Employer Services
- Standards for Jobseeker Services
- Standards for One Stop Management

In approaching the two customer services areas, we followed a deceptively simple process, as follows:

1. Determine the “As-Is” process – What and how are services provided, what is the customer flow, and how is technology used in service delivery
2. Define the problems in the As-Is process -- What adds customer value, what does not, and what is the root cause of any problems
3. Define “Should-Be” solutions -- How should the process change in the future in order to add value; can other partners add value; and how can we maximize technology
4. Define “Can-Be” solutions -- How close to the “Ideal” can we get at no cost or low cost
5. Convert solutions to standards -- How can we engender change and measure achievement
6. Continuous improvement -- What support would Centers need to achieve the standards, especially from the State, and what standards can be achieved beyond the baseline standards for certification.

In progressing through this analysis, three compelling processes occurred:

- We began each service area analysis by dividing subject matter into the categories of organization and staffing, delivering, and listening/measuring effectiveness. Those categories evolved into the service content, accessibility and management designations that may be seen in the standards and measures matrices.
- At some point about halfway through the process of developing jobseeker standards, the Team developed a Value Statement that served to drive the remaining deliberations; and
- A number of overarching themes emerged in each service area.

Each of these elements is covered comprehensively in Appendix E “Standards and Measures for Employer Services, Jobseeker Services and One Stop Management”.

For the majority of the standards in each service area as well as for management standards, the Core Team developed both “baseline” and “continuous improvement” measures. **Baseline measures** are minimum levels of achievement that would have to be met for basic certification. **Continuous improvement measures** demonstrate achievement of the baseline measure as well as a higher level of accomplishment that those Centers achieving the baseline measure can aim to attain.

The One Stop Center certification standards discussed above were written with the intention of describing an ideal, full service (i.e., comprehensive One-Stop Center. However, because of the diverse nature of the state and the desire to make services reasonably accessible to all, it was felt that there should be room for Centers that deliver high-quality services, if not a full range of services; and that simultaneously provide direct (hopefully seamless) access to a broad range of services for both jobseekers and employers. As such, it was felt that certification as an Affiliate Center should be available in certain cases.

Affiliate certification is not meant simply for Centers that cannot meet all of the baseline standards because of shortcomings in management or other factors somewhat within the control of the Center. Rather, Affiliate Centers are established to achieve economies of scale based on the characteristics of the local area and on available resources. Affiliate Centers may serve rural areas or areas with smaller/less dense populations, and may seek to accommodate differences in partner availability,

resources, and staff or other capacity. In the end, while all Centers should be encouraged to qualify as Full-Service, it may simply not be reasonable to expect that in some areas.

That said, the Core Team felt that standards for Affiliate Centers should be rigorous within the specific context of why they were established. Standards developed for Affiliate Centers are included here as Appendix F.

The final item of business for the Team to undertake was developing the framework for the certification system and establishing a process for implementation. Interestingly, when the Core Team presented the standards it developed for Employer and Jobseeker Services and for One Stop Management to the Steering Team, only a few relatively minor changes were made at the margins. However, the implementation process and system framework generated the most discussion among Steering Team members and between the Steering and Core Teams.

In the end, the process worked as it was intended. That is, the Core Team had sufficient opportunity to present its case; the Steering Team came to a consensus decision on each issue; there was further discussion to reconcile the positions of the two Teams where it was necessary; and finally compromise positions were reached that all parties could support and felt were capable of being implemented. In fact, that discussion generated energy and collaboration among and between Core and Steering Team members, fostered dialogue and exchange among different areas of the state and, in that way, the process had positive impacts beyond the immediate resolution of issues.

## D. COORDINATION WITH OTHER PROJECTS

---

One of the key elements of the Statement of Work for this project (indeed one of the key elements of *each* transformational project's SOW) was coordination with the other projects that were being implemented simultaneously. As stated previously, it is within the One Stop Centers that the results of all the other projects ultimately become manifest; it is, quite literally, "where the rubber meets the road."

It was therefore wise that implementation of this Certification project lagged slightly behind implementation of the other key initiatives. As a result, enhanced coordination occurred in the following ways:

- Core Team proceedings included extensive presentations on the Sector Strategy and Online Services projects. These presentations were deemed essential so that the Core Team could build an understanding of the key elements of those projects into the standards and measures for One Stop certification.
- In addition to a regular monthly call facilitated by the KWIB, we had multiple calls with those consultants working on projects with potentially the greatest impact on the substance of the certification standards: High Performing WIBs, Sector Strategies, and Branding. And those calls occurred *after* major project, and therefore policy, decisions were made. This allowed for the exchange of information as well as key documents, most importantly the Employer and Individual "Customer Journey" graphics.
- While work on the Workforce Training Academy did not begin until the Certification project was winding down, much of the Academy's curriculum will be based on the changes in One Stop operations anticipated by the certification standards and measures. The certification standards essentially stipulate much of how the One Stop Centers' work is to be performed, and so the competencies indicated by those standards will become an integral part of the Workforce Academy's curriculum.

## E. CONCLUSION

---

It is clear that there is no one certification system framework, implementation process or set of standards and measures that is ideal in all cases. There is only the system that best fits the conditions and policy framework in each particular State and that simultaneously sets the highest reasonably achievable standards. Most importantly, the only productive system is one that is supported by One Stop operators and partners, and that creates the conditions where exceptional customer service is not only expected, but that in fact becomes the norm. Creating that system means paying at least as much attention to the *process* that is used to create the system as to its content.

We believe that the system created by Kentucky meets all the criteria set forth in Part A of this report, and in fact *will* result not just in increased consistency and enhanced customer service across the Commonwealth, but in significantly enhanced coordination among One-Stop partners; improved resource alignment and therefore more productive utilization; new opportunities for sharing innovations in service delivery among workforce areas in Kentucky; and, most importantly, improved outcomes for Kentucky jobseekers and employers.